WMS-2034

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Dec. 10/64

Dear Maynard,

Your letter of the 3rd. is interesting and in general I agree with it. I wish I had time to read the material before I sent it to you, for my recollection of what I had written is confused with what I had intended.

I agree with you on the drawings. You may recall I once suggested your dad as the illustrator. I have still and motion pictures which can serve as a guide. Besides, I'd rather save what good pictures I have for other purposes.

A little confusion enters through your use of the word "domestic". These are wild geese, but they aredomesticated. There are two basic differences in their lives: They cannot migrate and I supplement their foraging for their own food. In other ways, there are, especially with regard to instinct and habit, exactly the same as undomesticated wild geese. In fact, the parents of whom I write may themselves have once been wild. If not, they were hatched from the eggs of genuinely wild ones. Their behavior in domesticity, as it realtes to the family, is essentially the same as it would be were they completely on the loose. Especially is this true of the father. The real difference is environmental. While the male would still stake out his turf, as do most animals, he would not have as much available food, ~~either naturally or through my feeding~~. But neither he nor the mother would eat any more. Of course, when I feed the young after hatching, that is a major difference. But they'd live without it, for the parents would lead them to food. I have pictures showing how they lead the yound to water, show them its many uses (drinking, swimming, etc)., the day they are born, show them how to eat and what to eat, and even how o o age in the banks of the pond.

This was for your information. I quite agree with your idea of the flashback to the wild state and have a few additional suggestions alongthat lines; the father's recollection of his own migrations ofthe past (providing an opportunity for further information about wild fowl life, all of it readily available from the Britannica, and I can also provide the descriptions), th strain on his wings, the preflight starvations for conditioning (partly caused by the shortage of food at the beginning of the migration season, the fall); the hazards of the flight- predators, hunters; his fine recollection of sheltered spots, especially those afforded by governmental action- refuges, feeding stations; nonetheless, going south and returning north, it was rough.

You are right about the intended age. Do you prefer a different one? I hope the vocabulary was suitable for that age, from which I am far removed.

You are even more right about conflict. Also about the third person. And 100% about the importance of raising questions, which I do not consider "subversive", as you perhaps jokingly suggest.

What I probably did not make clear was what I meant by the story of life. I had in mind both the obvious-conception, etc.; and also the responsibility of parents, something I have always believed children for the most part neither understand nor appreciate if, in fact, they are aware of it.

Is the wild goose les happy in domestication? Of course, only a wild goose can tell. Once pinioned, he has lost the capacity for flight. But is this important to him in even the poetic sense if he has no need for it and finds all the other essentials of life- including family life? I do not believe the domesticated goose is per se unhappy or unhappier. He has the same fulfilment and even the conflicts necessary to life he still has, if not in

identical form; the same problems, trials and worries. He faces the same necessities and assumes the same responsibilities. I believe that to consider the wild goose raised under what for lack of a better word I'll call free domestication has in any but a Goldwaterian sense lost his freedom is false. Has man lost his freedom because he is civilized? If man has become complacent in society, it it not because he lives in an organized society, nor is it because he doesn't have to worry about mastadons, or keeping himself from freezing. Was there any advantage in rubbing sticks over the striking of matches? Mr. Orchard can do and did do more with his family- and with more of his family- that he could of had they been hatched in Labrador. Domestication for him and his has not meant and will not mean a cow-like existence. We could say this, as you suggest, by the flashback, and perhaps more effectively by having the adults "captured" and then domesticated, by having them begin as wild wild geese.

I haven't thought seriously about the use ofthe children and wont be able to for my mind is cluttered with other necessities. I do believe children would be able to identify better with child characters in the story. However, I agree to whatever you prefer. It it turn out that you make one decision and then change your mind, that it not irremedial. The identification is one reason for wanting to change one of the boys into a girl.

It is wholly true that the goslings are bron with all the instincts of wild wild geese and they are in fact wild wild geese. It is the parents more than I who domesticate them.

Perhaps sometimes x soon we'll have a chance to get together and talk. I now think I may be making a trip to New York soon because of something else in which I am deeply engaged. I'll let you know if and when

I do. I certainly regret that when you were visiting your dad you didn't have occasion to see the geese. That would have helped. But if I come up I'll bring some pictures. If you have an 8mm movie projector or can borrow one, let me know and I'll bring some movies. I wont be able to carry my projector. The movies might also tell you more. If I come up I expect to stay with a friend in Brooklyn, although I may stay in Forrest Hills. If I am short on time, have you a sofa I can use? Then we could at night talk as long as necessary and pick up any threads in the morning? In saying a sofa, I mean just that – not anything elsberate. I also have a bad back, and a soft bed is not conducive to good sleep for me.

I have written this under very advense circumstances, and XX I hope it makes sense. My wife is transcribing some of my notes on a major research project, and the tape recorder is going, and I have a nephew who is visiting us, with the TV going.

In short, Maynard, if I am not in complete agreement with everything you said, I am not at least in strong disagreement with any of it and you may do as seems best to you. Fair enough?

If you have a chance to do any reading, besides the XXXXXXX Britanica, Dr. Morley Hall had several articles on geese in the National Geographic in about 1927 which were well illustrated and as I now recall them informative. Paul Ives wrote a book "Ducks and Geese" which says something of the Canadas. It is probably available in the NY Library. It is out of print and I do not have a copy.

Please excuse the haste. I hope in the near future you will understand why.

Sincerely,